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ABSTRACT

The need for including job entry application skills training in vocational curricula is pointed to by occasions when "A-students" fail to compete successfully in the job market and survey results that reveal that 50% of the reasons why employers reject applicants are related to the job application process. These skills, taught by the vocational instructor or by someone with more expertise in personnel management, can be covered in any one of five modes: in a separate class to be conducted in the last half of the spring semester before graduation; in a section or component within an advanced class; in seminars conducted by the college's community services section; as a component of the college's cooperative education, work experience, or placement services; or as a service of the college's career counseling center. Instructional content will depend upon the mode that is used, but should include a hierarchy of skills, including: (1) those which must be stressed, such as tips for applying for jobs, writing resumes, and handling job interviews; and (2) optional topics, such as management/staff relationships, affirmative action policies, professionalism, and career planning. Guest speakers and assignments requiring students to apply and interview for a job could be employed in the instructional process. A suggested outline for a career information course is appended. (JP)

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TEACHING - HOW TO GET A JOB

by

Ed J. Muraski

Dean of Instruction, Occupational Education

One of the most frustrating times of my teaching career came when one of my best students was turned down for a job which was filled by a low "C" grade student. All of the students in my classes were encouraged to apply for job openings as they arose in the last semester of their program. Job announcements were made in class, for all students. Usually the "A" or "B" students got hired over the "C" or "D" grade students. But in this case he was the best student (in my opinion) I ever worked with and he was turned down in favor of a low achiever. What happened?

Numerous reports on research in vocational education indicate that our students are poorly prepared for the job application process; therefore, they lose out in the highly competitive job market even though they have excellent job skills.

Do we want the "C" students to get the best jobs and the good promotions? Our students need help even after they get that first job. They need job entry application skills as well as information on how to get the job promotions when they are ready to move up or change jobs. The job application skills I'm talking about should serve both.

Some instructors question the importance of teaching information about the hiring process in their limited instruction time. Is it really essential to teach about resumes and job interviews to our vocational students?

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Every vocational instructor feels that they can educate a student with proper equipment and time to mold right into business, industry or government. Most of us have had these success stories with many of our students. But when some of them don't make it, we blame this on fate. That student needed more time or they had the wrong attitude, or the employer wasn't patient enough with the student. We are seldom willing to blame ourselves.

What happens when an "A" student in our vocational program becomes a failure in the world of work? Surely someone is to blame. Well, don't spread it around but it is our fault. Our job doesn't cease when the students walks out the door. In order to bridge the gap from formal education to the world of work, we must pave the way by providing our students with information and practice on overcoming job-entry screens.

WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM GETTING JOBS?

A statewide survey of the Texas Council for Vocational-Technical Education found ten reasons why students were rejected for jobs. Five of these reasons were directly related to the job application process: (1) little interest or poor reasons for wanting a job; (2) inability to communicate during a job interview; (3) personal appearance; (4) poor manners; and (5) poorly filled out job application forms.[1]

Well, I think we must face up to the fact that job entry application skills in vocational education programs are just as important as teaching a machinist how to grind tool bits, or isometrics for the draftsman, or front-end alignment for the general auto mechanic. In other words, you can't leave them out because no one else will do it for us, and it has to be done.

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[1]Final Report of Statewide Employer Survey, Austin, Texas, 1975.

HOW CAN WE SOLVE THE DILEMMA?

This may justify the need to teach information on "How to Get A Job"; but where do you fit it into your curricula and how do you gain the expertise to teach it?

What is the solution? There are basically two ways of solving the dilemma: teach it yourself or get someone else to teach it for you. Which is best, the one that works best for you? It's obvious that you must teach your students work skills related to their future occupation. If you did a task analysis and built the program around that schedule, you don't have lots of spare time to build in a special component to assist students in writing resumes or understanding employer screens and interviews. On the other hand, if your students' needs were analyzed well, you might already have some time devoted to these topics. Don't feel that you are the only one who can teach this to your students. In fact, think of it this way. Your students need this information. You're busy teaching work related skills so if you can use your ingenuity and get someone else to teach this for you you've achieved the best of both.

As vocational instructors, we pride ourselves in our knowledge and skill of our non-teaching occupation. We feel very comfortable in teaching this knowledge and skill to our students. On the other hand, few of us have had an opportunity to become knowledgeable enough about the hiring process to be a real pro. You seldom gain this experience or exposure unless you were employed in a management capacity or in personnel. Maybe you could get someone else to help or even do it for you. Before you make the decision of how you add it to the curriculum, let's review all the options and look at some techniques in developing a class or component. I like the eclectic approach, so let's look at all the options.

1. Develop a separate class -

   Appendix A has a comprehensive course outline with measureable objectives which can be presented to the curriculum committee at any educational level from high school to university. The complete course can be offered for a semester, quarter or in a mini approach. I have found it most successful in the last half of the spring semester or the last part of the vocational education program. If time permits, you could teach it or it can be taught by counselors or team taught with a combination of yourself, a counselor and a manager from one of the employers in the area.

2. Develop a section or component within your advanced class -

   Rewrite your course outlines to include a component on "How to Get A Job". In working these topics into your tight schedule, consider some of these techniques. Give students outside assignments. Secure a sample application from a local employer and have all your students take it home and fill it out and return it. Discuss interview techniques and require each student to go out for one live interview and make them document it for their grade. Have each student research how to develop a resume from library resources and submit a usable resume to you. Bring in a guest speaker or take a field trip and have the employer spend an hour in the plant on their hiring process. Use your imagination and teach your students the skills - that's the important criteria. Teach as much as time and space permits.

3. Develop a seminar or mini-class -

   If you can't provide a class or you cannot include it in your program, look at other alternatives. Set up seminars through Community Service. Use noncredit mini-courses and give your students extra credit for attending the sessions set up by the career center and have them write a report. These mini-courses might be set up in the summer or in Adult Education in the evening or on Saturday.

4. Add it as a component of cooperative education, work experience or placement - The cooperative education or placement programs deal with job placement. They would be happy to help your students learn and improve their job seach skills. Encourage them to assume this responsibility. This part's the monkey on their back. Some cooperative education programs meet four to six times per year and schedule similar sessions - combine with their efforts.

5. Use the career center -

The career center or library has a staff to work on these needs - involve them whenever possible. Assign the students to visit the center to confirm their career goals, look up resume and application examples and to seek employment opportunities. Give the students extra credit for that work and make it part of their assignments.

WHAT SHOULD THE CLASS OR COMPONENT INCLUDE?

It was important first to determine how we are going to present the information before we could determine the content. The time factor will definitely limit or allow for the content to be selected. From a special ad hoc advisory committee at El Camino College in developing our "How to Get A Job" class, a laundry list of topics was developed and then priorized to determine what should be taught to what must be taught. The following lists were derived from those committee meetings:

A. Topics which must be stressed[2]

1. How to apply for a job
2. Resume
3. Job interviews
4. Attitude, working conditions and what to expect

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[2]Corner Your Career II, Ed J. Muraski, D & E Publishing Company, Los Angeles, California, page 17.

A. Topics which must be stressed (Cont'd.)

5. Being flexible, changing positions, and leaving your position
6. Company information - organizational patterns

B. Optional topics to consider

1. Working with management
2. Special problems - women, handicapped, minorities, special groups
3. Industrial relations - personnel
4. Application
5. Professionalism
6. Tests
7. Playing the game
8. Career planning

The determining factor of how much content will be, of course, whether you have a class or component. One other consideration is to use a combination of techniques to help your students obtain the information needed. You could, for example, have your students start earlier than the last semester to begin digesting information on how to get a job. After all, it won't hurt even the students who drop out of your program if they at least learned how to get work, period. By starting earlier, you could also begin to use the other agencies such as the career center or placement office to help your students gain the skills they need.

SUMMARY

In today's complex employment system with affirmative action, women's equal opportunity, and tight employment market, the industrial relations personnel expect our students to be knowledgeable about hiring procedures. The employer can no longer afford to cater to unprepared applicants. We, as educators, must therefore find a way to add a component or class to our vocational education curri-

culum on "How to Get A Job". We can do it ourselves or we can get help in presenting this information to our students. Analyze your priorities and time available to establish what can be taught in that space. This education will provide our students with the tools they need to enter the world of work easily and move up the ladder of success which is a reflection of our total efforts in vocational education.

TYPICAL COURSE OUTLINE[3]

for

CAREER { COUNSELING / DEVELOPMENT / INFORMATION / PLANNING }

for

Cooperative Education

Career Guidance

Career Planning and Placement

by

Ed J. Muraski

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Career Information is a career oriented course open to all students. Career Information 1 & 2 prepare students to choose, change, or confirm their career goals through a survey of occupations, job analysis, self-analysis, company organization, and preparation for job advancement. Various kinds of employment are related to the industrial program.

Lecture: 1 hour (36 weeks) or 2-18 week semester
or 3-12 week quarter)

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[3]Career Course Syllabus, Ed J. Muraski, D & E Publishing Company Los Angeles, California, Chapter II

1. Career Information 1 & 2

   1 Fall-Spring-Summer; 2 Fall-Spring-Summer; One Unit Each

2. Required Background or Experience

   Prerequisite: Permission of the Program Director or Dean

3. Course Objectives

   A. General goals and objectives

      1.) Students will be better prepared to choose, change, or confirm their career goals.
      2.) Students will gain a better insight into the world of work.
      3.) Students will have a better appreciation for their educational program and will be able to identify their relationship to the world of work.
      4.) Students will be able to make more intelligent decisions about their careers.

   B. Specific measurable objectives

      1.) 70% of the students will be able to make decisions about their short-term career goals (an occupation) and 50% will be able to make decisions about general long-term career goal.
      2.) 95% of the students will be able to prepare an acceptable cover letter and resume.
      3.) 85% of the students will be able to fill out a job application correctly.
      4.) 70% of the students will be able to work cooperatively with others.
      5.) 70% of the students will study, practice, and observe correct interview procedures, and answer correctly 4 out of 5 questions on interview procedures.
      6.) 80% of the students will be able to prepare themselves for promotions, job changes, and gain job security professionally.

4. Texts and References

   A. Text: Muraski, Edward J., Corner Your Career II
      L. A. Ca. D. E. Publishing Co., 1978
   B. References for handout materials.

1.) Gruber, Resumés That Get Jobs. New York:, Arco, 1969.
2.) Norton, Paul, Making the Most of Your Job Interview. New York Life Insurance Co.
3.) Occupational Outlook Handbook. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

5. Minimum Student Materials

A. Textbook
B. 3-ring notebook cover for notebook
C. 10 sheets of 3-ring notebook paper
D. 3 pieces of carbon paper
E. 10 sheets of typing paper

6. School Facilities Available

A. Physical space

1.) Large lecture room
2.) Seating capacity for 100+ students
3.) 100+ tablet arm seats
4.) Chalk board

B. Audio-visual aids

1.) Overhead transparency projector
2.) Opaque projector
3.) Carousel-slide projector

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